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ABSTRACT

The role and responsibility of teacher educators are examined as they relate to changing demands and expectations of society. As life styles and behavior of students change, teachers are ill prepared to meet classroom situations where they are confronted with rebellion and unrest. Complaints voiced against teachers currently have more to do with the failure to maintain pupil discipline than with the failure to exhibit scholarship. The opinion is presented that teacher education does not occupy a central position in the over-all education field. It does not demand enough of the preparation of future teachers to leave an imprint, nor interact enough with former students to shape their lives as teachers or administrators. It does not conduct or support or control enough educational research to change the schools. It is suggested that teacher education should occupy the central position in the structure and process of public education. Thus there would be a greater predictability about the future effectiveness of students in teaching and a profound influence by teacher educators on the present and future of the schools. (JD)

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The Centrality of Teacher Education

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In any human endeavor there may be a central key to the solution of problems. In the breakdown of the social structure there is the family that may be the means to recementing the social fabric; if the family would stay together or rap together, the society will endure. In the threats to the role of the church there is the search for the true and the real theology that may bring man back to God. In the growing paralysis of the body politic there is certainty that the means by which integrity may be reintroduced into the person of the politician should be the first legislative priority. And in the increasing gap between the promise and the reality of education is the assurance that better trained teachers through better teacher training is the immediate means to the solution of the school mess. In education as in other ventures there may be a need to hang the tail on the donkey.

The central position of teacher education as the route to better schools is a hark back into early American history. The schools of colonial America had pursued very modest goals: the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The ability of the teacher to instruct was not a matter of great concern; it was as unimportant as the regularity of attendance in school by

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youngsters. The coming of nationhood and the ego and practical needs of nationalism placed a greater importance on the effectiveness of the schools and the efficiency of the teacher. The growth of the population and the gradually increased size of villages and cities led to larger schools and mass teaching and learning. An increasingly complex and interdependent society sought more from its schools than the lowest levels of performance by young people. One attempt to improve instruction was to employ older pupils as monitors to assist the schoolmaster in teaching large numbers of pupils. In addition to the Lancastrian system of organizing instruction, notice was taken of the caliber of teaching in the common schools. As a result of a New York legislative committee study, the first state education office was established in 1812 and the center of attention in education began to focus on the preparation of teachers.

Programs for teacher training were initiated in academies in the 1820s; the first normal school was established by the Reverend Samuel R. Hall near Concord, Vermont in 1823. The first state normal school opened in Lexington, Massachusetts in 1836 and the normal school movement spread to other states. Arguments over the advisability of formal programs to prepare teachers continued for fifty years while state universities and, eventually, private colleges and universities established instructional departments of education. Leaders in education emerged, such as Charles De Garmo at Cornell University, Nicholas Murray Butler at the New York College for Teachers

(later Teachers College, Columbia University), and John Dewey at the University of Chicago.

While teacher education was being established, there were other major concerns in education. New courses of study were added to the curriculum; by 1920 the comprehensive secondary school was in the offing. The child psychology movement exerted an influence on the curriculum that led to an interest in the reorganization of school structure with the establishment of the junior high school. And the center of attention shifted to the social consciousness of educational progressives who transferred the emphasis from subject matter and the importance of acquiring knowledge to an emphasis on social development and the primacy of the group.

In the residue of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi's object method of instruction and in the wake of the scientific method that was strained through Henry James and trumpeted by John Dewey, teacher training became a teacher education that gradually and laboriously evolved into a full collegiate program by and after World War II. In the meantime, the success of American educators and schools were only too obvious. No other nation or people had so perfected political and technical instrumentalities to overcome economic woes, correct social ills, provide moral leadership for the world, distribute resources to arm peace-loving states, destroy the enemies of the free world, and capture the secret of the power of the sun. Who could argue in 1950 that American education was the wonder of the ages?

Yet, by 1960 disillusionment had set in. A prior friend and new foe had shared our most precious scientific mystery, had captured Asian and eastern European former allies, and even had the temerity to place a space satellite in orbit ahead of ours; and all this by a nation of peasants. Another peasant population had fought us to a standstill in Korea. Someone must have been responsible for the fall from the heights; a logical someone or something could be that proposed by the series of critics who had warned against the evils of progressive education and the suspicious leftist orientation of John Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, George S. Counts, and others. The schools stood under attack; a stream of abuse was directed against teachers and textbooks and teachers' colleges, the bases from which the progressives had operated.

Textbooks were screened and teachers were subjected to loyalty oaths and former Harvard University president and ex-ambassador to Germany James Bryant Conant took over the task of examining teacher education on the suggestion of "some of the leaders in the field." Conant was reassuring that teacher educators were not unpatriotic but stodgy, conservative, self-protective, and unimaginative. He found little evidence of a satisfactory educational discipline in the content of professional education courses. Focusing on what was left, he proposed an emphasis on practice teaching in a school-college partnership. The appearance of James D. Koerner's The Miseducation of American Teachers about the same time as Conant's The Education of American Teachers served to focus attention on the preparation of teachers ⟶

as a major concern in education.

Conant continues as the last word in analysis of educational problems simply because nothing has appeared to challenge or substantiate his efforts or to lead in other directions. Gadget and gimmick salesmen have refined the Conant proposal with videotaping to improve presentation of lessons by teacher novices and with Performance Based Teacher Education and Competency Based Teacher Education. The net results of these proposals are slight extensions of previous contributions to the art and language of pedagogy. Microteaching moved the analysis of teaching from the Flanders technique of using a watch and pencil to record teacher and pupil behavior to use of videotape equipment while PBTE and CBTE extended Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives from determining means and content of instruction to instructional performance by students of teaching.

But if teacher education was to be the focal point for the disintegration of the educational system and the clue for solutions to schoolhouse problems, there was little to suggest that deficiencies in preparation of teachers were noted at classroom battle stations. Behavior of teachers was dwarfed as a problem by the behavior of students. Student unrest and rebellion was not attributed to teacher action or inaction but to parental permissiveness, changes in adolescent behavior, antiwar feelings, and interference by outside groups and influences. Learning problems have not been advertised by school administrators as teaching problems but as products of deficiencies in the home and

the general and growing abandonment by youth of established values and life styles. There have been charges that youngsters bring into the classroom the evils that lurk in dim streets and dark alleys rather than that teachers have carried with them into the schools faulty philosophies, erroneous theories, or incorrect practices from colleges and universities.

Complaints voiced against teachers have more to do with failures to maintain pupil discipline inside classrooms or in halls or cafeterias than whether teachers fail to exhibit scholarship in a discipline. Criticism is directed toward increasing reluctance of teachers to voluntarily staff student extraclass activities than to the ways in which they plan student learning activities. Far greater concern is shown for teacher militancy and use of professional organizations to seek increased benefits for teachers than how teachers organize classrooms. School administrators have not established new and intensive programs for the initiation of beginning teachers in the schools in response to concerns about the inadequacies of teacher education. There is no evidence that those who run the schools have identified teacher education as the culprit in the increasing problems of education. Lack of acceptance by teachers of responsibility for many noninstructional tasks, lack of parental support for the schools, and lack of public enthusiasm to finance education have been the villains rather than lack of success of teacher educators.

Teacher education may be compared with other vocational programs. Some presume that less time is needed to prepare

teachers than lawyers or physicians or dentists reflecting a belief that many years as a student from kindergarten to college is sufficient to produce experts in education. There seems to be a belief that teaching is basically a simple process that may be mastered by anyone. As a result, teacher education programs may be limited in scope and conducted in a mass process emphasizing numbers rather than quality. A typical secondary education teacher preparation program may constitute less than twenty per cent of a four-year program while preparation for other professions may constitute one to three or four years of study beyond the bachelor's degree. Students may be required to complete special undergraduate programs in the first four years of some professional preparation, such as a pre-medical sequence.

The suggestion that experience as a consumer (a student) provides an appropriate initiation for a practitioner (teacher) may be as inappropriate to teaching as to propose that the more experience a person has had as a patient, the better prepared he is to be a physician or a dentist, or the more frequently he has appeared in court, the more background he has acquired for the study of law. Experience as a consumer may not provide better preparation to be a producer. A more appropriate criticism of teacher preparation may suggest that professional education errs more in failures to establish adequate philosophical, theoretical, and practical bases for teaching and that years as a student do not provide that background.

Teacher education differs from other vocational programs in the multiplicity of role expectations made on teachers as

compared to those placed on physicians, lawyers, accountants, or plumbers. Most practitioners deal with things or clients on a one-to-one relationship and in a situation of relative independence. Teachers, on the other hand, deal with individuals in the mass and practice within a formal and restrictive framework. In many respects, the exigencies of the school as a social institution and as a context for the control of youngsters mitigate against the processes and procedures necessary for learning. Restricting most instruction to a classroom and to a rigid schedule that interrupts or terminates instruction at the end of a class period may inhibit teaching and learning. Other experts may concentrate on problems and conserve time in performing their craft; they are not regulated by the clock. Numbers and time create unusual problems for teachers in pursuit of their responsibilities.

There are problems that teacher education shares with other complex vocational programs. Most professional programs are associated with and financed by those outside the profession who may seek to oversee and supervise the process. Many vocational programs are inhibited in providing complete professional preparation as outside demands call for quicker and more efficient training at less expense. The future teacher needs an extended background for his new way of life as the future physician does to prepare to practice medicine. The teacher needs instruction (contrary to Conant) in philosophy and theory. But teacher education has unique problems. It must prepare practitioners in numbers totally unrelated to other professions, a fact that

makes recommendations for an extended internship impractical in terms of organization, numbers, and cost. Teacher education must struggle against the presumption that everyone is an educational expert. Teacher educators are subject to the scorn of academicians who teach college students without interest or background in the processes and procedures of teaching and who do not accept a science or theory of learning.

Teacher education does not occupy the central position in education. It does not demand enough of the preparation of future teachers to leave an imprint. It does not interact enough with former students to shape their presents or futures as teachers or administrators. It does not conduct or support or control enough educational research to change the schools. It cannot compete for attention of professionals from problems of educational administration, from the inadequacies of professional organization, from the influence of social forces on the schools or from the many conflicting demands placed on a teacher in the classroom. In a disorganized situation there may be no predominant power position, no persistent or consistent centrist position; in the disorganized state of education there is no central influence but many influences infringing on the crucial power position.

It would be an important step forward for teacher education to occupy the central position in the structure and process of education. In that situation, there would be a greater predictability about the future effectiveness of students in teaching. There would be a profound influence by teacher educators on the

present and the future of the schools. There would be some place to lay the blame for school problems and a reasonable expectation that action might be taken toward resolution of problems. In effect, it would be significant to find that there is a real donkey on which to hang a tail.